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Book Reviews

Kostas Palamas: Life Immovable, poems translated from the Modern Greek by ARISTIDES E. PHOUTRIDES. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pp. 237. \$2.00.

The translator of this volume of Modern Greek verse, Dr. Aristides E. Phoutrides, was instructor in the classics at Harvard University and is now professor of Greek literature in the University of Athens, Greece. He is himself author of a volume of English poems, *Lights at Dawn*. By way of introduction he has provided in this translation of *Life Immovable* a critique of Palamas' work, a sketch of his life, and an analysis of the poems in the present volume. This introduction and the footnotes to various poems furnish some information in regard to earlier modern Greek poets and history.

The author, Kostas Palamas, has been for many years secretary of the University of Athens, and, along with John Psicharis, author of the first complete grammar of the people's idiom, and Alexandros Pallis, the translator of the *Iliad* and the New Testament, he has been one of the principals in the struggle between those Greeks who advocated the use of the Greek vernacular by modern Greek writers and those who contended for an approach to the classical language of the Ancients. The bitterness of this struggle, with some religious fervor added, reached its height and broke into violence in 1901, when eight university students were killed and sixty wounded in a street riot following a demonstration against the translation of the New Testament into the language of the common people. Palamas, for his support of the vernacular, was naturally the object of much hatred and was sometimes moved to the writing of strong satire, the invective of which he transcends usually with some loftier thought.

The appellation "A New World-Poet," given to Palamas by this translator, gathers meaning from the extent of his themes and the breadth of his views on the world and humanity, and also from the notice he has attracted outside his own country. Among the commentators, French, English, German, and American, Eugene Clement in the *Revue des Études Grecques* declares that Kostas Palamas "is raised not only above the other poets of Modern Greece but above all the poets of contemporary Europe. Though he is not the most famous, he is incontestably the greatest."

The present volume of over two hundred pages contains only a part of the poet's work and only the first half of the *Life Immovable*, regarded as showing his full strength. The volume presents five collections of poems: "Fatherlands," sonnets inspired by Patras, the poet's birth-place, Missoloughi, Athens, Corfu, Constantinople, etc.; "The Return," poems perhaps calculated to

revive the Greek spirit depressed by failure of the war of 1897; "Fragments from the Song to the Sun," the physical sun giving life and beauty, and the sun within as source of inner life and thought; "Verses of a Familiar Tune," life's journey; and "The Palm Tree," where the flowers beneath it are made to speak and become a world of beauty, life, and thought. In "The Palm Tree" there is delicacy of thought and expression embodied in smoothly flowing verse:

Though small we are, a great world hides in us;
And in us clouds of care and dales of grief
You may descry: the sky's tranquillity;
The heaving of the sea about the ships
At evening; tears that roll not down the cheeks;
And something else inexplicable. Oh,
What prison's kin are we? Who would believe it?
One, damnèd and godlike, dwells in us; and she is Thought!

Old Greek myth, legend, and scenes naturally furnish and adorn many of his themes. Violet-crowned Athens, bathed and bared in that wonderful light, inspires a passionate poem of some length which begins:

All about us naked!
All is naked here!
Mountains, fields and heavens wide!
The day reigns uncontrolled;
The world, transparent; and pellucid
The thrice-deep palaces.
Eyes, fill yourselves with light!
And, ye, O Lyres, with rhythm!

Keenly sensitive to the enmity against him and to the slights sometimes put upon his race by other peoples, these moods are reflected in harsher verse:

The lazy drones! The frogs! The locusts!
Big men! Politicians! Men who draw
Their learning from the thoughtless journals!

A crowd of stupid, haughty blockheads!
Unworthily thy name is set
By each as target for blind blows;

The serious and reflective character which prevails in his work is in keeping with the closing lines of the song to the poet:

He (the poet)
Alone beholds Thee face to face,
O God; and he alone,
Reaching into Thy heart, reveals
To us Thy mysteries.

One is impressed by the wide range of qualities in his musings—the light, gay, hopeful, delicate, mystic, passionate, and glowing-through to their very opposites. He is a poet and a philosopher, and few of his poems suffer from lack of content.

It is fortunate his translator is one of his own race with poetic gift and a command of English. He seems to have done his work well and to have preserved the iambics, trochees, and anapests of the original. This volume is doubtless the best English version of a modern Greek poet and will prove of surprising interest to most readers.

W. S. EBERSOLE

CORNELL COLLEGE

Delphi. By FREDERIK POULSEN, translated by G. C. RICHARDS, with an introduction by PERCY GARDNER. Gyldendal, London, 1920.

An attempt is here made for the first time to summarize in English the results of the French excavations at Delphi. Mr. Poulsen, who is director of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek at Copenhagen, has not unnaturally devoted a large part of the book to a description of the more important finds; and in dealing with such material he displays admirable insight and precision. It is in the artistic comparison of Delphi remains with other reliefs and vase paintings that he is particularly worthy of praise; and his illustrations are in all cases adequate and well chosen. On controversial points he is generous, but one will obviously not go to so popular a book for a solution of questions like the date of the Athenian stoa or the placing of the pre-Sicyonian treasury reliefs.

The value of applying archaeological evidence as well as literary appears in the rapid historical sketch of Delphi and the influence of the oracle on the development of Greece. The oracle is properly described as a diplomatic center, fostering colonization and the arts, conserving moral and religious tradition but without dogma. The priests' influence in international politics has doubtless been overemphasized; but as Mr. Poulsen points out, they had an unusual fund of information at their disposal; and enough was known regarding finance at least to guarantee a profitable rate of exchange. The Athenian theoria is briefly described, and the two hymns with M. Reinach's transcription of the music are published. No account is given of the Pythian games. Other omissions may be mentioned. The considerable space given to digressions such as that on the condemnation of war in Greek literature might better have been devoted to a consideration of the religious tolerance of the oracle, the growth of its moral standards, the unique relation between Apollo and Dionysus, the function of Apollo as slave-liberator, and, in general, the bearing of the inscriptions of Delphi upon Greek history. But too much must not be demanded from one book on so far-reaching a subject; and certainly this volume comes to fill a place vacant for long in an English classical library.

W. R. AGARD

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